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ABSTRACT

Three specific classroom techniques for teaching vocational English as a Second Language to adults are discussed. They are three items on the SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) list of "easy things" to do to integrate workplace basics into the classroom, designed to encourage a student-focused classroom. They include: (1) starting each class with an agenda on the board, to communicate what is scheduled for the class session and allow for discussion or negotiation of expectations; (2) putting students in teams and assigning teams classroom maintenance jobs, to promote student involvement and help develop interpersonal skills; and (3) concluding every lesson by calling attention to the relevance of the lesson and the classroom activities to student lives, to focus student attention on what has been learned. Some specific procedures are suggested. The complete list of ten "easy things," a sample classroom schedule, and some classroom questions for the discussion of lesson relevance are appended. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Technical Assistance for
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Two years ago I began integrating the SCANS (workplace basics) competencies and foundation skills as a way to strengthen the connection between ESL classes and employment for my vocational and academic bound students. These competencies and foundation skills, sometimes referred to as "soft skills," proved to be the missing link in my class. Students came alive; they became more involved, developed positive attitudes, took initiative; in other words, they internalized the qualities necessary for the workplace. In addition, I am using the SCANS competencies as a framework in my VESL class in response to the changing political climate in adult education. Welfare reform and new immigration requirements are demanding that students be job ready in a shorter period of time. Students need to be more aware of the connection between what happens in the classroom and what happens outside of class, and by integrating the "soft skills" of the SCANS competencies, such as working in teams, using technology and monitoring performance, I feel that I am addressing these issues.

Ann Marie Damrau, VESL Coordinator for the San Diego Community College District, and I, an ESL/VESL instructor for the SDCCD, have been presenting ways throughout California on integrating SCANS into the classroom. All of the ten things on the list, "10 easy things you can do to integrate workplace basics (SCANS) into your ESL classroom" (Attachment A) encourage a more student-focused classroom; they are involvement strategies that get the students using English in real situations: to solve problems, negotiate, teach others, figure out ways to get along with each other, etc.

Numbers 1-3 on the "10 easy things" (SCANS) list are very easy to implement in the classroom, yet they make a huge difference in what happens, not only to the students but to the instructors as well.

1. Start each class with an agenda on the board.
Writing a simple agenda or schedule of what you are going to do in your class everyday is a simple thing that has very positive results. By writing an agenda, the teacher must be organized, with goals and outcomes in mind. Students see as soon as they walk in that their teacher has a plan. They see what they are going to learn that day. If the teacher can't get through the whole agenda because there isn't enough time, the class can talk about what took longer than expected and why. If there is a certain amount of time left, students can negotiate what should be covered and what should be postponed for the following day. Writing an agenda is one way to give learners more control over how a classroom functions because they are asked to make decisions, negotiate, and allocate time: SCANS competencies that transfer outside of the classroom.

2. Put students in teams and assign teams classroom maintenance jobs.
In the workplace or college, students will be expected to have strong interpersonal skills. These include working as part of a team, teaching others, negotiating and working in culturally diverse settings. Establishing permanent groups whose duties change periodically to do daily classroom tasks is one way of giving students the opportunity to build interpersonal skills in a meaningful way (Attachments B, C). For example, every week different groups of students would be responsible for passing out papers, erasing the board, helping the teacher with the overhead, making sure everyone signed the attendance roster, etc. Every instructor has tasks that she can delegate to students, who then negotiate on who will do the job that day. These teams suit the open entry adult classroom well. The team jobs simulate a typical workplace situation where crew or

team members are expected to train new employees. What better practice than for more experienced students to train the new students who come to our classes. If you are teaching in a classroom with tables, you can put a different job on each table and whoever sits at that table decides who will do the job and when they will do it that day. If there are many new students every day, why not post a daily sign up list so students can sign up and be responsible for a certain job everyday (Attachment D). The SCANS competencies covered in this classroom management technique are working in teams, sociability, individual responsibility, allocating materials, problem solving,
and more.

3. Conclude every lesson by calling attention to the relevance of the lesson and the classroom activities to students' lives.
Students will come back to class if they see that what they are learning will help them achieve their goals. At the end of class for even 2-3 minutes, focus students' attention on what they have learned that day and how what they learned will transfer to their lives. One way to do this is to go through the agenda on the board and ask, "Did we do this? Will you ever have to do this at work? In college? At home with your kids?" Another effective way to get students to realize that what they are doing in school has some relationship to their future is by using the poster "What did you do in class today? Did you…?" (Attachment E) If the instructor goes through the chart daily or several times a week, students begin to memorize the vocabulary. A very common question asked at job interviews is, "Why should we hire you instead of someone else?" or "What are your strengths?" or "What do you do in your English class?" The ability for students to verbalize with examples that they use equipment, volunteer, proofread and work in teams, are some of the competencies employers are looking for.

How has SCANS changed my teaching? I'd like to talk first about the classroom management changes I've made. On a more superficial level, I'm thrilled that I don't have to erase the board anymore. I have more time to walk around and see what students are doing because I don't have to collect the books, count them and return them to the cabinet. For 15 years I've been counting heads to be sure the number matched with my daily attendance sheet. I don't do that anymore. What has happened at a more profound level is that students are being empowered. I'm letting go. They are making more decisions on how the class runs and figuring out ways to deal with each other. They feel that they have a responsibility in the class. If they are not there one day, they know someone misses them because another student will have to do their job, just like at work. The retention of my class has improved. Students self-esteem has risen. I always wondered how to teach self-esteem and attitude. Integrating SCANS has answered that question. Watch a student buddy with a new student and train him/her on the procedures of the class and see how good that student feels about himself. Students realize that they are learning "real" English.

They aren't just practicing dialogues and writing sentences. They are using the language to find solutions to real problems and make decisions about their learning.

To conclude, I would like to quote Wendy Rader, an instructor at the San Diego Community College District who teaches Intermediate ESL and who has been using the three classroom management techniques described above: "I love the teams. When I show up in class, students learn English very quickly. And they KNOW this. I walk in, the transparency machine is set up with all my pens, ready to go. One team welcomes new students, opens my drawer and gives the new student pack, and explains how to do the registration card—a bond is formed. The whiteboard is erased, everyone signs in and if they don't the attendance team makes an announcement, papers are quickly passed; the janitors love me because one team has cleaned up the room, emptied the trash, and pushed in the chairs. Is that more communication? I think so. There's nothing for me to do except my job, to teach, while students are internalizing the qualities they will need for the workplace." Wendy has found the missing link.

10 Easy Things You Can Do to Integrate Workplace Basics (SCANS) into your ESL Classroom

by D. Price-Machado & A. Damrau

(Information in parenthesis lists applicable SCANS competencies.)

1. Start each class with an agenda on the board. *(Organizing, allocating time)*

2. Put students in teams and assign teams classroom maintenance jobs. *(Working in teams, sociability, individual responsibility, allocating materials)*

3. Conclude every lesson by calling attention to the workplace relevance of the lesson and the classroom activities. *(Monitoring performance)*

4. Teach students how to organize their classroom materials. *(Organizing, monitoring performance)*

5. Monitor students' progress with checklists and weekly tests. *(Organizing, monitoring performance)*

6. Pay attention to classroom incidents and conflicts. Develop lessons that teach the appropriate language students should use when dealing with these issues. *(Interpersonal skills, ability to reason, solve problems)*

7. Mode appropriate workplace behavior. e.g. Arrive on time, come with an organized plan, dress appropriately and maintain a positive attitude. *(Understanding systems, individual responsibility, self management, sociability, integrity, honesty)*

8. Encourage students to fix or make minor adjustments in equipment, such as hole punch, pencil sharpener, overhead projector. Teach the language that supports this activity. *(Trouble shooting)*

9. Designate student trainers or experts who can train new students. *(Teaching others)*

10. Encourage peer revision whenever possible, in writing or pronunciation. Teach the language used to make revisions. *(Understanding systems and individual responsibility, monitoring performance, correcting performance)*

(Donna Price-Machado is the author of a SCANS-based textbook, *At School and At Work: Skills for Success*, coming soon from St. Martin's Press.)

Attachment

TEAMWORK

Team & Job	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Notes	Weekly Totals
#1 Erase Board Help Teacher w/ equipment	*Hector* job: 2 att.: 2	*Sara* job: 2 att.: 1	*Kidan* job: 1 att.: 2	*Cruz* job: 0 att.: 2	*Vankeo* job: 1 att.: 1	-1 Cruz didn't call -1 Kidan didn't erase board	14
#2 Turn off computers and screens	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:		
#3 Make sure all students sign;arrange desks	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:		
#4 Trainers: help teacher w/new students	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:		
#5 Answer phone; take messages	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:		
#6 Be sure materials are put back	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:	job: att.:		

HOW THE CHART WORKS:

- The chart is on an erasable poster board. It always hangs in the room and students check their jobs and points daily.
- The team members stay the same for two or three months.
- The team jobs change every week.
- The teacher adds the points at the end of each week. At the end of the month, the team with the most points wins "The Team of the Month." Their picture is taken and posted. Each member of the winning team is given a small prize, usually a pen or something useful in class.

Rules: Let's use team #1 as an example.

J = Job. There are two points possible for job. On Monday, Hector must erase the board and help me with the overhead projector. He must watch me and take the initiative to do this; I don't tell students every time I want the board erased. They can ask me if I'm ready. If Hector is absent on his job day, other students in his team must cover for him to get the points.

Att. = Attendance. To receive 2 points for that day for attendance, everyone must be present. If someone has to work or be absent, they must either call and leave a message or ask a teammate to tell me. If one student doesn't call and is absent, the whole group is deducted one point.

SCANS Competencies

1. Teamwork
2. Teaching others
3. Leadership
4. Negotiating
5. Allocating time and human resources
6. Understanding systems
7. Responsibility
8. Self-management
9. Integrity / honesty
10. Problem solving

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(Note: contact ELT for original SCANS plan with calendar and graphics)

Jobs	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
erase boards	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
pass out papers	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
check CAV's	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
pass out books	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
collect books	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
answer telephone	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
write homework assignment on BB	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
write dictation on BB	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

(Note: contact ELT for original SCANS plan with graphics)

What did you do in class today?
Did you....

1) work in teams?

2) teach other students?

3) make decisions?

4) find solutions to problems?

5) organize your papers?

6) use equipment?

7) volunteer to ask or answer questions?

8) check your work and correct your errors?

9) use every minute of your time in class?

10) feel good about yourself?

*And of course speak, read, write & understand English.